

Idaho City Schoolhouse (City Hall)
Southwest corner of School and Main Streets
Idaho City
Boise County
Idaho

HABS No. ID-6

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ID-6

IDAHO CITY SCHOOLHOUSE
(City Hall)

Location: Southwest corner of School and Main Streets,
Idaho City, Boise County, Idaho.

Latitude: 43° 49' 47" Longitude: 115° 49' 54".

Present Owner: City of Idaho City.

Present Occupant: City Hall and Community Church.

Present Use: City Hall, Community Church.

Significance: Constructed in 1891, this two-story frame building replaced the original schoolhouse on the same site, and was used for seven decades. One of Idaho City's historic structures, the schoolhouse possesses a number of interesting details such as a two-story central bay projecting off the front of the building, a steep gable roof capped with a belfry, and a series of peaked lintels, repeated over the doors and windows.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The building was completed in September 1891.
2. Architect: A newspaper article from the Idaho World reported that F.V. Tinker, "a first class mechanic, is the architect of the new schoolhouse, chief carpenter. With him in charge the building is sure to be a fine structure and in architectural beauty an ornament to the town." (Idaho World, July 3, 1891).
3. Original and subsequent owners: The schoolhouse stands on Lot I, Block K of the townsite of Idaho City Plat of 1915. Reference to the title is in the Deed Books located at the County Recorder and Auditor's Office, Idaho City, Idaho.

1915 Deed, September 21, 1915, recorded in the Deed Record 41, p. 73. John H. Myer to School Districts No. 1 and 27 of Boise County, Lot 1, Block K.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: F.V. Tinker also served as the general contractor.

5. Original plan and construction: On June 5, 1891 John Rust tore down the old schoolhouse, for which he had paid thirty dollars. By July 17 the Idaho World reported that, "The schoolhouse is beginning to loom up finely. The skeleton is up, and the building will soon present a handsome appearance."

On August 21, 1891, the paper predicted that the schoolhouse "will be completed in three weeks." However, by September 4, funds ran out, and although only a week's work remained, the work had to stop. The paper noted that in September 11, 1891 the school trustees, John Kenally, Charles Mann and O.A. Duquette, each put in three days work on the new schoolhouse. But the construction was not finished. A benefit dance was held at the school on September 18th, and \$137.95 was raised.

6. Alterations and additions: Serving as a schoolhouse until the early 1960s, the building is slightly altered. A small room containing the city offices has been constructed in the first floor schoolroom space.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The present schoolhouse is located on the same lot as its predecessor. For a decade the citizens of Idaho City were involved in a dispute whether to build a new schoolhouse. The school was a most important and symbolic institution in this frontier town. The newspaper reported the students' grades on the front page, and as Idaho City was struggling to become a permanent community, after the mining industry declined, the education of the town's children was a matter of great significance. In a July 22, 1890 editorial, the Idaho World complained:

"Our schoolhouse has now reached that point in decrepit, tottering old age, (and buildings reach that condition as well as living beings) at which it cannot be patched up and made serviceable for any length of time..."

The paper continued to point out the frequency with which money for a new schoolhouse had been voted down, and to make an unflattering comparison with the new community of Nampa, who were building a two-story brick schoolhouse. The writer (most likely editor C.E. Jones) concluded his editorial with a condemnation of local sluggishness and retrogression:

"Idaho City is old, non-progressive and fossilized, mossbacked, unanimated and slumbereth in a 'don't give-a-continental dang' apathy, and this is more especially the case in school matters."

A year later, however, the town shook off its apathy and the new schoolhouse was built. The building included grades 1 through 8. Replaced by a new building, the old schoolhouse is still used as the City Hall and Community Church.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: A photocopy of an old photo shows the schoolhouse with dark painted window and door trim, 1948. Original photograph at the Idaho Historical Society, Boise, Idaho. Included in the HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books: County Recorder and Auditor's Office.
Boise County, Idaho City, Idaho

Interviews: Barry Palmer, John Brogan and Kitty Brogan.
Idaho City, Idaho. May 29, 1974.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Idaho World. Newspaper articles, 1865-1891.
Idaho City, Idaho.

Prepared by: Alan Minskoff
Historian
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1974

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This two-story building replaced an earlier log schoolhouse. The schoolhouse contains one room on each floor, the first floor serving grades one through four, and the second floor room, grades five through eight.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The building measures approximately 28' (three-bay front) x 45' and is two stories high.
2. Foundations: The native stone foundations are in good condition.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The walls are narrow clap-board siding painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Wooden frame construction supports the building.
5. Stoop: The west (rear) entry is approached by a six-step stoop that connects with a wooden platform.
6. Chimneys: One brick chimney projects from the north slope of the roof.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: A two-story front bay is eight feet wide and four feet long and includes the first floor main entrance. A wooden panel rear exit door on the first floor has a four-light fixed sash. The exit door with a recent wire-glass light on the west side of the second floor opens onto a fire escape. The main entrance has a decorative peaked lintel of wooden material.
- b. Windows: All the windows are double-hung sash with two-over-two lights each. The windows also have the same decorative peaked lintel that appears above the east doorway.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The gable roof has a clipped hip on its east end at the belfry. A hipped roof shelters the front projecting bay. The covering is corrugated metal.
- b. Belfry: An open belfry sits at the peak of the roof on the east side. The covering is corrugated metal.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The main entrance doors open into an entry vestibule. The original double doors have been replaced by a pair of standard doors. From this vestibule is the original cloak room (now a bathroom-storage room), the original storage room (now a bathroom-furnace room), and the original first floor classroom (now the city office and meeting room). A small room has been constructed on the southeast corner of the classroom.
 - b. Second floor: The second floor space, including the area created by the projecting front bay, consists of the original cloak room (which has an entrance door into the classroom), the original storage room (which is now divided to include the furnace-storage room), and the original second floor classroom.
2. Stairways: On the east side an L-shaped wooden staircase connects the entrance hall with the second floor. This staircase is of simple design covered with tongue-and-groove boards. Three steps on the west side of the second floor ascend to a door which once opened onto a fire escape.
3. Flooring: Most of the six-inch pine flooring is covered with modern asphalt tile.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings are covered with painted gypsum board, which is an addition and is placed directly over the original wallpaper. The wallpaper was placed over muslin which was on a building paper, all of which was placed on rough sawn shiplap boards. All the rooms have tongue-and-groove pine wainscoting. The wainscot height varies, and the top trim on the wainscot includes a chalk rail in the classrooms.
5. Doors: The panel doors have simple trim.
6. Hardware: The locksets and knobs are brass.
7. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Oil furnaces have replaced wood burning stoves on both the first and second floors.
 - b. Lighting: Incandescent lamps light the building.
 - c. Plumbing: Plumbing has been installed in the first floor cloak and storage rooms.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Facing east, the building is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of School and Main Streets.

Prepared by: William B. McCroskey
Project Director
Historic American
Buildings Survey
Summer 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Idaho City project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), in cooperation with the Idaho Bicentennial Commission in the summer of 1974. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed by William B. McCroskey (University of Idaho), the project director; Alan Minskoff (University of Chicago), the project historian; Jack W. Schafer (University of Cincinnati), the project foreman, and the student assistant architects, Rae F. Noritake (University of Idaho), Laurence Ferar (University of Oregon), and Mark T. Wellen (Texas Tech University). William Klein, a HABS staff architect in the Washington office, edited the drawings in 1975. The written architectural and historical data was edited in April 1980 by Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington office. The documentary photographs were made by Duane Garrett in 1976.